1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

CHAPTER X.

SIGNS AND HIEROGLYPHICS.

IT has been asserted by many persons that the languages of the Indians are deficient in words, and that, in order to make themselves understood, they are obliged to resort to motions and signs with their hands. This is entirely a mistake. I do not know a nation of whom foreigners do not say the same thing. The fact is, that in every country, signs and motions with the hands more or less accompany discourse, particularly when delivered with a certain degree of earnestness and warmth. Foreigners, who are not very conversant with a language, pay in general as much and sometimes more attention to these motions than to the words of the speaker, in order the better to be able to understand what falls from him. Hence, almost every nation charges the others with too much gesticulation in speaking. For a similar reason, a foreign language is generally thought to be spoken quicker than our own, while the truth is, that it is our ear which is slow in distinguishing the words, not the voice which speaks that is too quick in uttering them.

The Indians do not gesticulate more when they speak than other nations do. In their public speeches they will, like our preachers and lawyers, enforce what they say by gestures and motions of the body and hands, in order to give greater weight to their observations, or to represent the subject they speak of in a more lively manner than can be done by words alone; but in common conversation they make few of those motions, and not more, I believe, than we do ourselves; even the wo-

l:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

men, who every where speak more than the men, never want words to express themselves, but rather seem to have too many, and they do not oftener employ gestures in aid of their conversation than the vivacity of their sex induces them to do every where else.

It is true that the Indians have a language of signs, by which they communicate with each other on occasions when speaking is not prudent or proper, as, for instance, when they are about to meet an enemy, and by speaking they would run the risk of being discovered. By this means they also make themselves understood to those nations of Indians whose languages they are not acquainted with, for all the Indian nations understand each other in this way. It is also, in many cases, a saving of words which the Indians are much intent on, believing that too much talking disgraces a man. When, therefore, they will relate something extraordinary in a few words, they make use of corresponding signs, which is very entertaining to those who listen and attend to them, and who are acquainted both with the language and the signs, being very much as if somebody were to explain a picture set before them. But they never make use of signs to supply any deficiency of language, as they have words and phrases sufficient to express every thing.

I have frequently questioned Indians who had been educated at our schools, and could understand, read, write, and speak both English and German, whether they could express their ideas better in either of those languages than in their own, and they have always and uniformly answered that they could express themselves with far the greatest ease in their own Indian, and that they never were at a loss for words or phrases in which to clothe every idea that occurred to them, without being in any case obliged to gesticulate or make motions with their hands or otherwise. From the knowledge which I have acquired of their language, I have

1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca.1800) 1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

sometimes they scatter themselves, marching at proper distances from each other for a whole day and more, meeting, however, again at night, when they keep a watch; at other times they march in what is called *Indian file*, one man behind the other, treading carefully in each other's steps, so that their number may not be ascertained by the prints of their feet. The nearer they suppose themselves to be to the enemy, the more attentive they are to choosing hard, stony and rocky ground, on which human footsteps leave no impression; soft, marshy and grassy soils are particularly avoided, as in the former the prints of the feet would be easily discovered, and in the latter the appearance of the grass having been trodden upon might lead to detection; for if the grass or weeds are only bent, and have the least mark of having been walked upon, it will be almost certainly perceived, in which the sharpness and quickness of the Indians' sight is truly astonishing.

In some instances they deceive their enemies by imitating the cries or calls of some animal, such as the fawn, or turkey. They do this so admirably well, that they even draw the dam of the one and the mate of the other to the spot to which they want them to come. In this manner they often succeed in decoying the enemies to the place where they are lying in ambush, or get an opportunity of surrounding them. Such stratagems, however, cannot be resorted to in all seasons; with the turkey, it only answers in the spring, and with the fawn's dam until about midsummer. In the same manner, when scattered about in the woods, they easily find each other by imitating the song of some birds, such as the quail and the rook, and at evening and morning, and particularly in the night, the cry of the owl. By this means they all join each other, though not at the same time, as they are not, perhaps, all within hearing; but the cry of the owl is repeated from time to time until they are all assembled.

1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

Nor does it follow, when they reckon or number the heads of their prisoners, that they have been or are to be put to death.

It is an awful spectacle to see the Indian warriors return home from a successful expedition with their prisoners and the scalps taken in battle. It is not unlike the return of a victorious army from the field, with the prisoners and *colours*, taken from the enemy, but the appearance is far more frightful and terrific. The scalps are carried in front, fixed on the end of a thin pole, about five or six inches[a] in length; the prisoners follow, and the warriors advance shouting the dreadful *scalp-yell*, which has been called by some the *death-halloo*, but improperly, for the reasons which I have already mentioned. For every *head* taken, dead or alive, a separate shout is given. In this yell or whoop, there is a mixture of triumph and terror; its elements, if I may so speak, seem to be *glory* and *fear*, so as to express at once the feelings of the shouting warriors, and those with which they have inspired to their enemies.

Different from this yell is the *alarm-whoop*, which is never sounded but when danger is at hand. It is performed in quick succession, much as with us the repeated cry of *Fire! Fire!* when the alarm is very great and lives are known or believed to be in danger. Both this and the scalp-yell consist of the sounds *aw* and *oh*, successively uttered, the last more accented, and sounded higher than the first; but in the *scalp-yell*, this last sound is drawn out at great length, as long indeed, as the breath will hold, and is raised about an octave higher than the former; while in the *alarm-whoop*, it is rapidly struck on as it were, and only a few notes above the other. These yells or whoops are dreadful indeed, and well calculated to strike with terror, those whom long habit has not accustomed to them. It is difficult to describe the impression which the *scalp-yell*, particularly, makes on a person who hears it for the first time.

[a] [Qu. read "feet." Ed.]

6:Harrington E-5 (1907-1910)1921
NM7 Delaware NM7
Lenape

he comes to no harm. At each house the impersonator dismounts and enters, making known his errand by signs, but saying only "*Ho^{n}-ho^{n}-ho^{n}*," and everywhere they give him tobacco, which he puts in his sack. At this time the people frighten disobedient children with the threat that, unless they behave, the Mĭsi'ng^{w} will carry them away in a sack full of snakes.

Preparations.—The dance-ground customarily used for this purpose has meanwhile been put in order, a cleared place in the woods selected for good shade and pleasant surroundings, and the logs which serve as seats arranged to form the rectangle within which the dance takes place. A great pot of hominy is also prepared; this constitutes the main dish of the feast.

The Ceremony.—When the people have gathered on the night appointed, and the impersonator has returned from the bushes where he retired to dress, wearing the mask and bearskin suit (pl. II), the speaker addresses the people and relates the origin of the dance, then addressing the Mĭsi'ng^{w}, says, "Take care of us